

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

The following listing of claims replaces all prior listings of claims presented in the application.

Claim 1 (currently amended): An absorbent article comprising

a liquid absorbent layer, the absorbent article having a skin surface and a garment surface;

a pair of compressed grooves, where the liquid absorbent layer is compressed and recessed from a side of the skin surface toward the garment surface, being provided to extend in a longitudinal direction of the article, the compressed grooves being located laterally apart from a longitudinal centerline of the article, each one of the pair of grooves being located on a single side of the longitudinal centerline, the pair of grooves each curving inwardly a separation distance between the compressed grooves being smallest on a lateral reference line of the article or within a range of an equal distance forward and rearward from a [[the]] lateral reference line in the longitudinal direction such that a separation distance between the compressed grooves is smallest at a point within the range, the pair of grooves being substantially parallel to each other over distances forward and rearward of the range; and

a rear flexible portion, where the liquid absorbent layer is recessed from the side of the garment surface toward the skin surface, being provided to extend toward a rear end edge of the article from a starting point that is located closer to the rear end edge than the lateral reference line, at least a portion of the rear flexible portion being located on the longitudinal centerline and between the substantially parallel compressed grooves.

that at a region extending an equal distance forward and rearward from lateral reference line in the longitudinal direction but not overlapping with the rear flexible portion.

Claim 6 (previously presented): An absorbent article as set forth in claim 1, wherein pressure-sensitive adhesive layers for adhering the article to an undergarment are disposed on the garment surface, the pressure-sensitive adhesive layers being located laterally apart from the longitudinal centerline and present at least on the lateral reference line and on both sides of the rear flexible portion.